Solapur-Hotgi gauge conversion is presently in progress and is targetted for completion by 31.3.1999. The rest of the section from Bijapur to Gadag is targetted for completion by December, 2000, subject to availability of resources.

(b) (i) Expenditure likely to be incurred on the work—Rs. 274.57 crores. (ii) Outlay for 1998-99—Rs. 20 crores.

Reservations provided for wait-listed passengers

2719. SHRI K. M. KHAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether wait-listed passengers are provided reservations in all classes and trains originating from and passing through Delhi, New Delhi and Nizammudin Stations by the Ministry under emergency quota;

(b) if so, the names of passengers separately travelling on duty and general category class and train-wise benefited from this quota during 14th to 21st June, 1998;

(c) whether some criteria for selection of beneficiaries has been laid down; and

(d) whether such quota is under control of Minister's Secretariat or the bureaucracy of the Ministry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) to (d) A limited number of berths/seats have been earmarked as Emergency Quota in all important trains in different classes to meet the urgent travel requirements of High Official Requisition holders, Ministers, MPs/MLAs, VIPs and other emergent demand. After meeting the demand for self travel of high dignitaries, other requests received from various quarters are considered and the unutilised quota is released taking into account factors like status of passengers travelling, nature of urgency like travelling on Government duty, bereavement in the family, sickness etc. This quota is released by the nominated officials as per prescribed instructions.

Since a large number of requests are received from various quarters and are dealt with on day-to-day basis details of category-wise allotments made are not compiled.

Internet Service Provider

2720. MISS FRIDA TOPNO: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Indian Railways have worked out a strategy to become an "INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS";

(b) if so, details thereof;

(c) whether the Railways are experiencing any difficulties in this regard and if so, the steps taken to overcome them; and

(d) whether Railways also propose to offer as an alternative to lease excess capacity on its telecom network at 60% of DOT cost and if so, details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Railways have plans to offer their excess telecom capacity to the Internet Service Providers. However, the tariffs are yet to be decided.

Facilities for aged and Physically Handicapped Person at Nagpur Junction in Maharashtra

2721. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the facilities which are available for the children, aged and physically handicapped persons at the Nagpur junction in Maharashtra;

(b) details thereof; and

(c) if not, whether Government propose to provide the requisite facilities at the junction?

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THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) and (b) Facilities like Wheel Chair for aged and handicapped persons, a separate reservation counter for handicapped/senior citizens are available at Nagpur station. The facility of concessional travel tickets to children, aged and handicapped is also available. Besides, a quota of two Sleeper Class berths has also been earmarked for handicapped persons in the long distance Mail/Express trains originating from Nagpur station.

(c) Does not arise.

Own Your Wagon Scheme

2722. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) The year of launching 'Own Your Wagon' Scheme;

(b) the main objectives of that scheme;

(c) whether Government have made any review on the functioning of the scheme;

(d) if so, whether the objectives have been achieved;

(e) if not, whether Government propose to modify the scheme; and

(f) if so, the steps taken in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) 'Own Your Wagon' Scheme was lauched in the year 1992.

(b) The main objective of the scheme is to supplement the resources available with the Railways for acquisition of rolling stock and thereby enhance the rail transport capacity to meet the needs of various sections of economy by encouraging private participation in ownership of wagons.

(c) to (f) In order to make the scheme more investor friendly the scheme is constantly reviewed based on the feedback from the users. The scheme has since been modified twice in 1994 & 1997. The results of revision are encouraging.

Conversion of MG to BG in the Siliguri Alipur Duar line in NF Railway

2723. SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the scheme for conversion from MG to BG in the Siliguri Alipur Duar line in NF Railway was sanctioned;

(b) whether the funds for the same were diverted to other area;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor and the future plans for conversion of this line to BG; and

(d) if not, the present status and action plan to implement the gauge conversion programme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) The Project is included in the Budget and is to be taken up after obtaining the requisite clearances for which action has already been initiated.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) The work will be started after obtaining the clearances and will take about 5 years from completion subject to availability of resources.

Small Traders Trained in Ticketless Travel

2724. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that a large number of small traders trained in ticketless travel, often travel from Tundla, Shikohabad and Aligarh to New Delhi without tickets;

(b) whether these persons force the bonafide travellers to vacate their seats and occupy the same on those routes; and